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AUTHOR Henry, Anita
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ABSTRACT

The Foreign Language for International Trade degree program developed by Indiana University of Pennsylvania is described. The curriculum combines elements of a basic business course with elements of a language program. It is a rigorous program with 36 credit hours in both business and language. The program presents problems for language students who fear math and for business majors without language experience. The program has a study abroad component for one year in France, Spain, or Germany and an optional internship following course completion. Students who have successfully finished the program, including the internship, learn confidence in their bilingual business skills. Several graduates have been placed in prestigious jobs based on their academic experience. It is important for any institution considering such a program to carefully inventory its institutional resources. If something is lacking, the institution must decide whether to use scarce funds to put it in place or whether to use existing resources to improvise. This type of program requires centralized authority with management from one strong-willed individual. (RW)

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THE MARRIAGE OF LANGUAGE AND BUSINESS: A WORKING CURRICULUM

Anita Henry
Foreign Languages and Literatures
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

(Presented in its original form at the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Baltimore, Maryland, April 29, 1983.)

I. The History and Structure of the Program

By early 1980 several members of the department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at the main campus of Indiana University of Pennsylvania (better known as IUP) were disturbed in their academic ivory towers by evidence of something extraordinary happening. We became aware, slowly, as I recall, and with a deliberation of thought befitting our rather sheltered lives, that an enormous amount of media attention was being given to the problem of the monolingual American trying to do business in an increasingly international and hence multilingual marketplace. The economy was beginning to falter, trade balances that had always been heavily in the favor of the United States were going askew, and even the elected politicians in Washington were becoming concerned about the mess. The best of them, in seeking answers to a problem that had not occurred in this country in two hundred years, spotted the incredible language-laziness of the American public. Since American businessmen are part of that public, even those dealing in multinational corporations, the leaders in Washington began suggesting that some part of our difficulties might be tied to the fact that our business community cannot match the linguistic agility of the average French high-school student, much less that of a highly-trained Japanese automobile exporter. President Carter appointed a commission to study the problem in detail. The plethora of articles that ensued, published as they were in the syndicated columns of Field

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Enterprises, of The Washington Post, of Newsweek, and of The New York Times, and so forth, began to catch even our attention.[1] In fact, we could hardly miss the hue and cry, since both The Indiana Gazette (the local newspaper) and The Indiana Penn (the University student newspaper) joined in.[2]

At the same time that this relative media blitz attempted to awaken and enlighten the general (or at least the reading) American public, our students at IUP began coming to us for help with putting together very complex double majors, involving a College of Business degree on the one hand, and a language major on the other. (It has since ceased to amaze me that our audience, our students, are often more aware of their needs, and also of what is actually occurring in the larger world, than are we who try to impart to them our narrow specialties. This is doubtless a normal and a healthy state, and one that I am forced to accept as I watch my students program French self-tutorials into personal computers which I am afraid to touch.) The problem with what the students were trying to do soon became apparent, however. The specialization majors in the College

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[1]We refer to articles such as, Sylvia Porter, "Foreign Language Skill Enhances Job Chances," Your Money's Worth, Field Enterprises, 1978; J. William Fullbright, "We're Tongue-tied," Newsweek, July 30, 1979; a United Technologies advertisement in The Washington Post, August 9, 1979; Robert Reinbold, "Panel Urges Stress on Foreign Tongues," The New York Times, November 8, 1979; Malcolm G. Scully, "Require Foreign-language Studies, Presidential Panel Urges Colleges," The Chronicle of Higher Education, November 13, 1979; and "The Bilingual American: Endangered Species," U.S. News and World Report, April 27, 1981.

[2]"Lack of Fluency Hurts Business," The Indiana Evening Gazette, May 6, 1981; and "Editorial," The Indiana Penn, September 29, 1979.

of Business require quite a heavy load of accounting courses, for example, beyond the general required business core. There is not time within such a program for enough elective courses to allow a student to finish his thirty-six credits of language, the minimum required for a major, much less the time to acquire the additional credits that real language proficiency requires. The students were tying themselves into an undergraduate program that would require a bare minimum of five years to complete, and more often six years, if the study-abroad experience which we consider necessary for real fluency were to be included.

The solution to this difficulty was suggested by one of our very practical colleagues in the College of Business, Dr. Dennis Tiger, who is an accounting professor. Dr. Tiger felt that for those students whose ultimate career goal is a position in a multinational corporation, a five-year M.B.A. is a much better entry degree, than, for example, a five-year undergraduate degree in accounting. He encouraged us, then, to find a way to provide the students with the business core program, or those courses which normally constitute the first year of an M.B.A. program, in combination with the language proficiency studies. This curriculum combination was the one which we eventually adopted, after studying other combination programs which were already in place at the time, including those at Eastern Michigan University, The Pennsylvania State University, and Georgetown University. We incorporated into the experience the study-abroad year which we feel is essential for true mastery of the language in question. It is perhaps both a strength and a weakness of our particular program that the study-abroad experiences already existed at IUP. On the one hand we did not have to re-invent these particular

"wheels," and that was certainly an advantage in getting our program off the ground. It was probably also an advantage in "selling" our program to faculty and administration in our internal approval process for new curricula, as we were able to demonstrate quite a few resources already in place. On the other hand, the pre-existing differences in our study-abroad structures for our different languages caused a lack of conformity in our program from language to language, as the curriculum models demonstrate (please see the appended models). In my mind this is something of a disadvantage, but nothing we have felt we could not live with thus far.

It was decided early in our program development process that what was needed was something more formal than another "double-major" approach, of which we already had several.[3] The very number of requests from students interested in both language and business training suggested to us that a separate degree program, listed as such in the university catalogue and accompanied by a curriculum design that students could follow for themselves, should be the eventual goal.[4] Such a procedure keeps advising time (expensive faculty hours) within reasonable bounds, and also frees the adviser to answer the many questions about the study-abroad experience, overseas internships, and ultimate career preparation. Students must be

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[3]Students at IUP have majored in, among other combinations, French/Biology, French/Economics, French or Spanish/Consumer Services, French/Spanish/Nutrition, French or Spanish or German/International Studies.

[4]I expressed my arguments for a separate degree rather than a double major in an earlier article, "The Packaging and Marketing of a Language Proficiency Program in Combination with Commercial Skills," The PSMLA Bulletin, LIX, 2, 1981.

told from the outset that the final goal in their educational training is the M.B.A. or some other graduate-level experience combining language and business such as is beginning to be offered at several universities and business schools in the United States.[5] One of the adviser's jobs is to stress to the students that there are no guarantees, that graduate-level work is essential to eventual entry into the types of careers these students envision, and that this undergraduate degree is probably going to be as worthless as most other four-year degrees are becoming in terms of immediate job success, if it is not followed by a Master's level experience.

We named our program the Foreign Language for International Trade degree, at the suggestion of Dr. Cyrus Altimus, dean of the College of Business, and began the lengthy internal and external approval process for all new programs and curriculum development. After the expected (and, frankly, some unexpected) internal haggling and political compromises, and again with the encouragement and support of the College of Business, The Foreign Language for International Trade degree passed the IUP Senate in April of 1982, was approved by the university's board of trustees the following July, and was given final Pennsylvania Department of Education approval in June, 1983.

II. The Students' Preparation: IUP Curriculum and Study Abroad

A. The Curriculum

The curriculum of the Foreign Language for International Trade degree

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[5]The University of South Carolina, The Pennsylvania State University, The Monterey Institute of International Studies, The Lubin Graduate School of Business (Pace University), The American Graduate School of International Management (Thunderbird), The Graduate School of Management, University of Dallas, The School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia, and the new New York University combined MBA language program come to mind.

is a recombined curriculum. It takes an element previously available to only the College of Business majors (the thirty-six credit hour business core, or basic business courses taken by every business student prior to specialization) and combines it with an element previously available only to language majors (the thirty-six credit hour specialization in French, German, or Spanish, differing from the regular B.A. curriculum only in the inclusion of commercial language courses). It is quite a rigorous program. Students are advised as they enter it that if either language or math skills are deficient, remediation will be required, and therefore the period of time necessary for degree completion will be lenghtened. The language component begins with an intensive or accelerated six-credit course in intermediate language. (The IUP department of foreign languages and literatures offers both the Dartmouth Intensive Language Model and an accelerated six-credit course at the intermediate level, and each has classes meeting five days a week. Both options are available in our three major languages). The business component requires that the student deal with calculus in the second semester, in preparation for the accounting and statistics courses that are required in the sophomore and junior years. In addition to the rigor of the courses involved for freshmen, some of the semesters require completing eighteen credit hours in order to stay on schedule. This is considered an overload at this university, and requires the permission of the dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences; the permission is based on adequate academic performance and grade average.

It has been our experience so far that two types of students have two different kinds of problems in following the program at exactly this pace. Those language students who fear math tend to need remediation of

one or two mathematics courses, in order to be successful with the calculus. Those business majors who seek entry into the program, on the other hand, sometimes have great difficulty with the language courses. We have learned that if they enter the program as freshmen, the remediation can be accomplished without too much stress during the summer. Students further along in their college career who wish to work toward this degree are advised that an additional semester or two will likely be necessary. We have been surprised at the number of students who will accept this solution, apparently because they perceive that they are working toward something of real value to their professional lives.

I would add a personal observation that it seems to be the brightest and best young people who are attracted to this kind of program and who are willing to devote themselves to four years of much harder work than is often necessary these days to earn a college degree. The students coming in have that rare combination of intelligence and energy that tends to mark or to predict success in all fields of endeavor. In fact, they need to have this in order to complete the year's study abroad in a country where their language is spoken, and to accomplish the internships in France and Mexico which we offer to our successful students.

B. The Study-abroad Experience

IUP's study-abroad programs for language students pre-date the Foreign Language for International Trade degree by many years. The first was started over twenty years ago in Valladolid, Spain. French and German programs followed in 1977 in Nancy, France, and in Duisburg, Germany. A second opportunity for Spanish students had been established in 1975, closer to home, in Xalapa, Mexico. We have come to consider these in-

country experiences absolutely essential for complete subject mastery. We at IUP do the ground work, the preparation in the language, and leave to the immersion experience in the country where the language is spoken the completion of the process. Somehow the magic always seems to occur, and the students who struggled with irregular French verbs as freshmen return from their year in France with the beginnings of fluency. Since I would be the last to enter into the theoretical speculation of how language is acquired and internalized, this aspect of the process continues to fill me with a sense of mystery and awe. However, practical observation demonstrates that it works, and that it works better than anything else, and so we included the study-abroad segment as an integral part of the Foreign Language for International Trade degree.

As I mentioned above, this incorporation of pre-existing study-abroad experiences created a certain difference in the degree as it is worked out in the different languages. These programs were instituted by different individuals to meet different needs in different languages and different countries in different decades. The Valladolid program runs in the spring semester only. The other Spanish program in Xalapa is a summer program. The French and German programs run in the Université de Nancy II and the University of Duisburg for the duration of the academic year at those institutions. The Spanish students, then, have to add the Xalapa experience during one summer in order to achieve the same amount of foreign exposure that the French students have during their year at Nancy. The advantage to the Spanish students who follow this route is that they have experienced two Spanish-speaking countries, and the differences in Spanish and Mexican slang and usage, and two American

plus one European nations. To my mind, at least, this extra broadening of experience is very helpful to the person training for a career in international business.

I shall trace briefly what the student does in the program I know best, at the Université de Nancy II. After attending orientation meetings at IUP during the spring semester preceding their year in Lorraine, students travel to Nancy in September. The French university year begins in October and ends in June, so the students normally have some acclimation time, a period for easing the worst culture shock, before classes begin. Students take the placement tests which are administered by the Université de Nancy for the Cours pour Etrangers (foreign students' classes in French language, literature, and civilization). After being placed in the appropriate level of the Cours, the students also seek out those classes in the regular university curriculum which they need for finishing their IUP requirements in general education. Most students will take some American or English literature, some art history, and some culture physique with their French colleagues. The IUP liaison officer at the Université de Nancy II is Professeur Jean-Marie BONNET, an American Studies scholar who is also an administrative officer of the university. He and his office help to solve any on-site problems which may occur.

After the exams of the fin d'année, the final examination at the university, the students in the Foreign Language for International Trade degree go to Paris for the examination given by the Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Paris. The first IUP students took and passed the Certificat examination in June, 1982. They are then ready to begin what has become the capstone of the program, the internship experiences.

III. The Internships in Paris[6]

This introduction to the French internship program will be necessarily brief, as the program has been described in detail elsewhere.[7] We do not require that the International Trade students terminate their degree with an internship, because it is contrary to university policy to do so. All IUP internships, the foreign ones included, are administered by the university Office of Professional Laboratory Experiences, which is headed at the present time by Dr. Larry Vold. All internships adhere to the same set of basic guidelines, i.e., that there must be supervisory visits by an IUP faculty member in the discipline granting the credit for the experience, that no more than one credit per week on the job should be given, and so forth. I have found that these guidelines and this uniform university policy are a great help and a great comfort to the person directing internships abroad. Once again no new "wheels" have to be invented, and the guidelines are there to be set before any potential foreign supervisor. I believe that they also give a sense of comfort to the French supervisors, who are able to see that the university has a well-established program for internships and that it makes a very serious committment to them.

The internship placements which we currently have in Paris include one with an international agency, one with an American bank, one with an

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[6]When this topic was presented in its original workshop format at the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, the interns in Paris were presented in their living quarters and at their jobs in a slide and tape presentation.

[7]Anita Henry, "The Vision and the Reality: Internships in Paris!" in PANEL (the Peer Assistance Network in Experiential Learning), a service of the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education, 310 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006, June, 1983.

American insurance company, five with an airline, and one with a press agency. The IUP faculty supervisor takes on the responsibility of controlling and assuring the quality of the work experience for the students, and of assigning a grade for the credits earned. The grade is based on observation of the intern's work, the quality of the required daily journal and the final paper on some aspect of the experience, and the recommendations of the French supervisory personnel. The IUP supervisor also has as his or her responsibility to record carefully any suggestions made by the French supervisors. The suggestions of several French supervisors at the end of the experience in 1982 caused us to increase some of the internship periods from six weeks to eight weeks. It is obviously essential that the French supervisors be well-pleased with the quality of work produced by the students and with the whole experience in general. These placements in Paris offer no remuneration to the students, and cannot do so, since the students are covered only by their student visas (valid until September); they do not have work permits from the French government. I should mention by way of ending this description that there is also a nine-credit internship being taken in Xalapa, Mexico, this summer of 1983.

IV. Results and Recommendations

The results that we have seen already in the students who have successfully finished this program through the internship experience have been nothing short of extraordinary. We send adolescents to France, and mature, capable, confident adults return, comfortable in both their language and commercial skills. We wish them well and recommend them highly to their graduate schools. It is of course too early in the history of

this particular program to be able to list a lot of impressive employment successes. We do have already, however, one former student well-placed in hotel management at one of New York's finer hotels, the one where "the Queen stands guard." We have two former students now buying for department stores, one at the largest store in Pittsburgh. They tell us that their European preparation won the job for them, and also makes them feel poised and comfortable during their buying trips to New York ("if you can handle a job in Paris, in French, New York is a piece of cake)". We have one on the California coast and one near the coast in New Jersey, two in graduate school and two more will begin graduate school in the fall. They will succeed, even those who were perhaps marginal students as freshmen, for I have seen them working in Paris and I was as impressed as I was amazed. The magic has happened, once again.

If all of this pleases us, and if what we have accomplished since being shaken from our towers of academic ivory gives us a sense of having created a good program, we have also learned that this is not the kind of program development which allows one to rest on one's laurels. It needs improvement. It needs refinement. It needs a coherent future direction. It requires further faculty training in the commercial language area. It requires constant energy, imagination, and work. If any one of these ingredients is lacking, now or in the future, the program will never be what it has the potential of becoming. The possibility of excellence is challenged here, as everywhere, by the possibility of mediocrity--always so much easier to achieve.

In conclusion, I would make the following recommendations to those individuals and those institutions who would contemplate instituting such

a program in an effort to help the country, help the students, and ultimately, of course, help themselves. Begin with a careful and thorough survey of institutional resources. Where some needed component is not in place, what would be necessary to add it? Need it be a product of rare fiscal funds, or can it be nourished by staff energy and imagination? Know what the goal of the program would be and what possible future developments should be, both for the students and for the institution. Be courageous, be patient, be persistent, be political, be calm and be combattant as the need arises. Do the research thoroughly and use the outside resource people who can offer ideas, encouragement, and help.

Finally, whatever you do, don't try to run the program "by committee." We have earned the right to dispense this last bit of advice through our own bad experience. A program such as this one needs the single-minded attention and whole-hearted dedication of one strong, hard-working individual who can provide both focus and a sense of direction for it. Lacking such leadership means courting the potential disasters of missed deadlines, incomplete advising, late transfers of credits, sorry paper work, and a mess of a budget that is skewed incoherently by the dynamics of interpersonal politics. Potential growth will not occur, and stagnation and the resulting frustration will ensue.

The idea is really too fine, and the potential results too spectacular, to allow such sloppiness to happen. We would encourage the growth of strong, healthy programs combining language and commercial skills, and would hope to see them in this decade all over this land.

Curriculum Design for

FOREIGN LANGUAGE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE DEGREE

(Spanish)

First Semester

SP 252
EN 101
LAB SCIENCE
HEALTH
SOCIAL SCIENCES

16 credits

Second Semester

SP 254
SP 351-352
LAB SCIENCE
MATH 121

17 credits

Third Semester

SP 361 or 363
MA 214
AG 201 (Acct. I)
EC 121
EN 102

15 credits

Fourth Semester

SP 362 or 364
EN 201
FS 215 (Stat.)
AG 202 (Acct. II)
EC 122

15 credits

Fifth Semester

AD 235 (Bus. Law)
FS 310 (Finance)
MK 320 (Mktg.)
SS Elective
PE
SP 055

14 credits

Sixth Semester

SEMESTER ABROAD

18 credits

Seventh Semester

AD 321 (Bus. Comm.)
FS 241 (Mgmt. Info.)
SS Elective
FA Elective
SP 055
PE

14 credits

Eighth Semester

MG 360 (Mgmt. Info.)
BU Elective
SS Elective
EC Elective
SP Elective

15 credits

Curriculum Design for

FOREIGN LANGUAGE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE DEGREE

(French and German)

FR/GM 252
EN 101
LAB SCIENCE
Soc. Sci.
16 credits

FR/GM 253
FR/GM 254
EN 102
LAB SCIENCE
Math 121
17 credits

FR/GM 351
FR/GM 361
FR/GM 053
Economics 121
Math 214
AG 201 (Acct. I)
17 credits

FR/GM 352
FR/GM 362
FR/GM 054
Economics 122
FS 215 (Stat.)
AG 202 (Acct. II)
17 credits

FR/GM 055
FR/GM Elective (Lit.)
ASBED 235 (Law)
MG 360 (MGMT)
FS 310 (Principals of Fin.)
Soc. Sci.
Health
18 credits

FR/GM (Lit. or Trans.)
MK 320 (Princ. Mktg.)
AD 321 (Bus. Comm.)
FS 241 (Mgmt. Info. Sys.)
Soc. Sci.
Soc. Sci.
18 credits

In Europe

LANGUAGE ELECTIVES:
minimum og 15 credits

GENERAL EDUCATION

Intro. Course
American or English Lit.
P.E.
8 credits